

January 18, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.
Third Sunday of Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Hunter Balczo

If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.

PRELUDE St. Peter (How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds)

Alec Rowley

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalm 29*)

Leader: Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of the LORD's name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.

ALL: **The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

Leader: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. The LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

ALL: **The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare; and in the LORD's temple all say, "Glory!"**

Leader: The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

ALL: **May the LORD give us strength! May the LORD bless us with peace! Let us worship the LORD!**

***OPENING HYMN:** "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (356)

INVITATION TO CONFESSON:

Leader: John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him—that is in Jesus! Together let us confess and repent, living into John's prophetic call.

PRAYER OF CONFESSON (unison)

God of love, descend upon us as we speak our prayer to you just as you descended upon your Son at his baptism. We confess that we have not fully lived into the call that you placed upon our lives at our baptisms. We have not fully lived into the dreams that you have for our lives and for the life of all Creation. We have not loved our neighbors fully. We have not embodied courage fully. We have not enlivened joy fully. Remind us of our baptisms. Remind us of your call. In the name of Jesus Christ, your Beloved, we pray. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! God claimed Jesus as son and called him beloved. God's beloved son saves us!
ALL: Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: (From *The Confession of 1967*)

By humble submission to John's baptism, Christ joined himself to humans in their need and entered upon his ministry of reconciliation in the power of the Spirit. Christian baptism marks the receiving of the same Spirit by all his people. Baptism with water represents not only cleansing from sin but a dying with Christ and a joyful rising with him to new life. It commits all Christians to die each day to sin and to live for righteousness.

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son. As we hear your word this morning, may we know ourselves to be your beloved children. In the name of Jesus Christ your son we pray. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Isaiah 42:1-9*

SECOND LESSON: *Acts 10:34-43*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 3:13-17*

SERMON God's Beloved

MUSICAL MEDITATION *Come, Be Baptized* Smith, arr. Schrader

We Respond in Faith

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: Today we remember our baptisms. In baptism we commit to the mission of Jesus Christ. As we give our tithes and offerings, may we do so according to that commitment. Please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Now let us reflect on and practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY God is Working His Purpose Out Martin Shaw

* DOXOLOGY:

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

O God, we dedicate these tithes and offerings to you as a commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ, a mission that we joined in our baptism and remember this day. In the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved, we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

* CLOSING HYMN: "Baptized in Water" (492)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Glory Be to God the Father Gloria Patri Carlton Young

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* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 1/18: Adult Study – 9:00 AM
Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM
Soup Sale

MONDAY 1/19: GA - 6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY 1/21: Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH)
“Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom)

“Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom)
GA – 7:00 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **SOUP SALE TODAY AFTER WORSHIP!** Come prepared to purchase a delicious lunch for a cold day and to support our general fund in the process!
- **ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON JANUARY 25TH AFTER WORSHIP** Our congregation's annual meeting will be after worship on Sunday, January 25th. We will have a potluck luncheon with meat provided by Session as well. Sign up in the narthex!
- **"BYOB"** (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. You can connect to Zoom with a smart phone, tablet or computer. If you're not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our e-mail list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano.
- **"THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD"** class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am in the middle classroom (across from Pastor Tyler's office). This group is reading through the book, "A is for Alabaster" by Anna Carter Florence. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so come as you are able. If you need a book, or for any other questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **The choir chairs are FINISHED!** They are the culmination of a decades-long held dream of choir members, many of whom have joined the Heavenly Chorus and were part of the desire to have the chairs either replaced or reupholstered. **We are joyously accepting donations to the Choir Chair Fund from anyone and everyone who wants to make a contribution in honor of or in memory of a cherished person in their lives who loves/loved music.**
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.

Prayer List

Anthony	Victor
Brady Vanes	Marian Clayton
George Griner	Ella P
Guy Hendricks	Melissa J.
Bill and Anettia Holmes	Rita Stronczek
David Markley	Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
Pat and David Kingen	OGB
Diana and Ray Mendoza	Edna Cruz
Janet Orem	Charlie
Cindy Waltz and Sister	Jerry & Rena Martinez
Yvonne Suroviak	Nicole
Georgette Sknerski	Greg
Jakob Holden	Pastor Jane
Denise Matthys	Mary Ellen Edeus
Jan Oprea	Jane and David
Florance Cody	Flora R.
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea	Tyler Gall
Laura Buono Domsic	Phil
The Windstrups	Luana Sulkowski
Rick Parker	Sonny Buono
Gary Everhart	Shannon Sutton
Caroline Studer	Robin
Darlene O'Brien	Eunice
Doug & Sue Matthews	Betsy
Janet Terpstra	David
Glen Nahler	Trina & Scott
Tom	Joe & Kathy
David Hamblin	Breanne Polan
Jana Tolley	Tammy
Larry & Bonnie Perryman	Alex
Delta Rose	Ben
Winnie Owen	Mike Kelly
Breeanne	Sue Heth
Mom Bechtler	Loved ones of Pat Kingen

Isaiah 42:1-9

42 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.
2 He will not cry out or lift up his voice
 or make it heard in the street;
3 a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.
4 He will not grow faint or be crushed
 until he has established justice in the earth,
 and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
5 Thus says God, the Lord,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
 and spirit to those who walk in it:
6 I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness;
 I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
 a light to the nations,
7 to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
 from the prison those who sit in darkness.
8 I am the Lord; that is my name;
 my glory I give to no other,
 nor my praise to idols.
9 See, the former things have come to pass,
 and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
 I tell you of them.

Acts 10:34-43

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

God’s Beloved

Isaiah 42:1-9; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Last week we heard of the Holy Family having to flee to Egypt to seek refuge in the face of violence being perpetrated at home. As so often happens with displaced people, they were never able to return to their true home even though they desperately wanted to. When Herod died, they even tried to get back to Judea. But it could not be. Herod’s son had taken over, and the danger was still potent. Again, their story is a direct parallel to that of so many immigrants in the world today.

So, they migrated once more and settled in the district of Galilee, in a town called Nazareth. It was there that Jesus grew up, going through the developmental stages we all do—early childhood, tween years, teen years, young adulthood, presumably up until around the age of thirty. We know next to nothing about Jesus as a child and young adult. We get one tantalizing story from *Luke* about him visiting the temple in Jerusalem when young and becoming separated from his parents because he is so engrossed in his studies. When Mary and Joseph went back for him, I am sure in a desperate tizzy, we get this glimpse of what Jesus was like. According to the author of *Luke*, the child *Jesus said to them*, “*Why were you searching for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?*” *But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.*

That’s all we get of the entirety of Jesus’ life from the time his parents fled with him to Egypt until today’s passage about his baptism. It is a beautiful account of a young child full of faith, obedience, and wisdom. It all seems just a little *too* perfect, though. Our Gospel writers, looking back a couple hundred years, have a tendency to want to present Jesus as this perfect embodiment of God. This tendency is perfectly understandable. It is something that we all do. Let us not forget, though, that in all of his divinity Jesus was also human.

And I am sure that his humanity was on full display throughout his childhood, tweenhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. After all, even this idyllic scene in the temple represented an act of rebellion if you look at it from a different angle—Jesus effectively ran away from his parents and hid out in the temple so that they would leave him behind to do what he wanted. I mean, he grew up to be the greatest rebel of all time! He turned over the tables and chased out the establishment at that very same temple! He defied the most powerful empire the world had ever known! He flipped hierarchies and empowered the poor, the prisoners, the outcasts, the sick, and the demon possessed! He even broke the sacred law of Moses, healing people on the Sabbath day! This rebellious nature surely came from somewhere in his early years, from the way that he was brought up.

Remember, he was brought up by Mary, the original rebel rabble rouser who foretold all of it and surely inculcated the same spirit in her son. You can bet that she raised him well in the ways of resistance, and you can bet that Jesus practiced that resistance at home. I mean, all humans go through growing pains! I am sure that Jesus had his terrible tantrums as a toddler, just as I am sure that he had his jolly toddling about, exploring the beauty of creation in the ways that only a toddler can. I am sure that Jesus had his nightmares and night terrors from the trauma of displacement at a young age, just as I am sure that he had lovely nights snuggling with his

parents and hearing stories. I am sure that Jesus had disagreements and arguments with his siblings and friends, just as I am sure that he had fun with them playing games or making music or acting. I am sure that Jesus had an awkward, hormonal time going through puberty, just I am sure that he came to understand the wonders of our growing and changing bodies.

I am sure that Jesus had difficult mood swings and phases as a teenager, just as I am sure that he came to experiment with and then embrace the various aspects of his identity. I am sure that Jesus had moments of profound loneliness because of his identity, just as I am sure that he found other people whose particular brand of weird could mesh well with his particular brand of weird. I am sure that Jesus stayed out past curfew sometimes and argued with his parents, just as I am sure that he had those blissful moments of adolescence and young adulthood when friendship becomes part of the parent-child relationship. And I am sure that Jesus had a difficult time separating from his parents when he moved out, just as I am sure that he grew through his experience of differentiation from them.

And on top of all those difficult growing pains, he had the additional burden of being considered different from everyone else, of being set apart. All of his neighbors surely gossiped about his parentage—about his mother's pregnancy before marriage and their claims that he was conceived by God. All of his age mates surely picked up on their parents' whispered conferences and thus picked on him sometimes. All of the town leaders in Nazareth surely approached him with unease or even hostility, fearing what he would bring down upon them if he had had to hide from the powerful Herods in Jerusalem. And then there were all those rumors swirling around of this outsider family claiming that their child was gifted, was the messiah even! You can imagine the jealousy, the bitterness of that community! After all, look how they treated him in Nazareth when he came back as an adult! They scoffed at him and showed their disdain. "Oh, that's just Joseph's son!" At best, he would have held up his head and owned his uniqueness with pride. But there also would have been those times when he hung his head, turned into himself, and questioned "Why?" and questioned if it was all worth it. Just as Jesus' life as an adult was not easy, I am convinced that his life growing up was not easy. Perhaps he grew close to God out of desperation for a friend, for somebody who would listen and understand. Isn't this how so many of us start to talk to God?

There was one other person in Jesus' life who could have perhaps understood what it was like to be prophesied and foretold, to come from a miraculous birth, to bear the burden of an entire people's expectations, to be so drastically different from everyone else. This person was Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, child of Elizabeth. He was the one person in all the world who could have even had a taste of what Jesus' life had been like, just like his mother had been the one person in all the world who could have understood what Jesus' mother had gone through.

And so, when Jesus left the home that he grew up in, separating and differentiating himself from his parents, he went to the only other person whose weird could mesh with his weird. He had heard of John doing his baptism thing, drawing large crowds to the river at the edge of the wilderness, calling them on the carpet for their misdeeds, and commanding them to repent. And he understood that there was something special about standing completely vulnerable before others, laying it all out there, and being washed by cool, cleansing water.

John had known that this moment would come. He had prophesied it and proclaimed it to the crowds by the river: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

And then we get to the good stuff. "When Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Wow! Before any of the miracle-working and the rabble-rousing and the world-transforming. Before the healings and the exorcisms. Before the sermons and the parables. Before defying the empire. Before walking on

water and calming the storm and multiplying fish and loaves. Before the sacrifice. Before the resurrection. God claimed Jesus as God's own and called him the Beloved. Just as he was—not because of anything he had done. Just as he was—even after going through all those growing pains. Just as he was—odd one out, precocious, traumatized, bullied, gossiped about, carrying the weight of the world upon his shoulders. Just as he was, the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, baptizing him with love. Just as he was, before he did any of the things that we so celebrate as Christians today, God was well pleased. Wow! Imagine what that meant to him after all that he had gone through! Imagine what sort of soil that created for him to sink his roots into and grow—for him to sink the roots of the Kingdom in for it to grow! God claimed him and called him beloved simply because of who he was, not because of what he did.

Friends, Jesus is not the only beloved of God. This descending of the Holy Spirit, this claiming of parentage, this proclamation of love, this affirmation and approval at the Jordan River—all of it was done in public so that the world would know how God feels about God's children. All of it was done so that *we* would know how God feels about us. God made us as we are, and we are God's beloved because of who we are.

Sure, we screw up a lot. Sure, we go through growing pains all the way up to old age. Sure, we hurt each other and the world. Sure, we hurt ourselves. Sure, we fail to love each other. Sure, we fail to love ourselves. This is why John the Baptist calls us to repent and to make amends and reparations. But no matter what, none of this takes away any of God's love for us. That screwed up, formerly murderous, sinful man Paul said it best, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Friends, let us recall our own baptisms today. If, like me, you don't remember your baptism, or if you have not yet been baptized, then recall another baptism you have witnessed or been part of. Recall the Spirit that was in that space. Recall the love that filled everyone present. Recall the power of it all. That feeling of being accepted, that feeling of being claimed, that feeling of being beloved because of who we are and not because of what we have done or what has happened to us—that is the good news that we have to offer the world. That is what we are to carry to the nations. That is what we are to give to our neighbors. That is what we are to receive in ourselves.

Listen. Can you hear it? It is a voice calling out to you. "You are mine. You are my beloved. With you, I am well pleased." Amen.

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing 356

Robert Robinson, c. 1758

1. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of God's unchanging love!
2. Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Tune: NETTLETON, opposite.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.

3. O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

Baptized in Water

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BUNESSAN 5.5.8.5.5.9

Michael A. Saward, 1981

Gaelic melody
Arr. Dale Grotenhuis, 1985

1. Bap-tized in wa - ter, Sealed by the Spir - it, Cleansed by the
 2. Bap-tized in wa - ter, Sealed by the Spir - it, Dead in the
 3. Bap-tized in wa - ter, Sealed by the Spir - it, Marked with the

blood of Christ, our King; Heirs of sal - va - tion, Trust-ing the
 tomb with Christ, our King; One with His ris - ing, Freed and for -
 sign of Christ, our King; Born of the Spir - it, We are God's

prom - ise, Faith - ful - ly now God's prais - es we sing.
 giv - en, Thank - ful - ly now God's prais - es we sing.
 chil - dren, Joy - ful - ly now God's prais - es we sing.